



Bufo, the Toad That Taught Me the Secret of the Universe

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I'm faced with an impossible task. Two weeks ago, I sat with the most powerful medicine I have yet encountered: Bufo Alvarius. The psychoactive compound, 5-meO-DMT, is 4–6 times stronger than DMT, which is already one of the strongest psychedelics known to mankind.

Writing about my psychedelic experiences has been one of the most important integration practices for me, if not the most

important. Yet, when it comes to my recent experience, I'm at a complete loss of words.

Nothing I will say, think, or write will do the experience justice. Nevertheless, I will try. It's precisely this process of finding language that's helped me make meaning, so I'm sitting here today hoping it will once again help me make sense. I'm inviting you into that process, recognizing the possibility that nothing I write will make any sense to you, because it might not even make sense to me, either.

5-meO-DMT: The Potent Psychedelic that Reliably Produces the Ultimate Mystical Experience

5-meO-DMT is one of the most potent psychedelic compounds, belonging to the family of tryptamines (such as DMT, psilocybin, LSD). It occurs naturally in the Bufo Alvarius toad, also called Sonorian Desert toad or Colorado River toad, which can be found in northern Mexico and the southwestern US.

It's the toad's venom that contains the 5-meO-DMT. It can be extracted by gently squeezing the toad's glands — if done properly, this doesn't harm the toad. Once extracted, the secretion is pulverized and smoked through a glass pipe.

The journey starts within seconds of the inhale and predictably produces a mystical experience that lasts on average 20 minutes. People frequently report "meeting god" or, in other words, experiencing "pure cosmic consciousness". A single 5-meO-DMT session has been shown to promote neurogenesis, but overall research is still scarce.

The toad became more well-known when boxing legend Mike Tyson talked about it on The Joe Rogan Experience:

“I came across this thing called the toad. I smoked this medicine, drug, whatever you want to call it, and I’ve never been the same. I look at life differently, I look at people differently. It’s almost like dying and being reborn... It’s inconceivable. I tried to explain it to some people, to my wife, I don’t have the words to explain it. It’s almost like you’re dying, you’re submissive, you’re humble, you’re vulnerable — but you’re invincible still in all.”

Due to the recent surge in interest, conversationalists warn that the toad will soon be at risk of extinction and has recently been categorized as endangered in some regions. There’s a synthetic alternative that many argue is one and the same experience.

Nevertheless, for anyone eager to experience the naturally-occurring compound, it’s critical to find sources that are sustainable. My guide, for example, sourced the medicine from two well-known doctors in Mexico who have been working with indigenous communities for over a decade and have set up a foundation for the conservation of the toads.

My Intention for Bufo Was To Connect With My Essence

I had the opportunity to experience this medicine with a practitioner that I know and trust deeply in the container of an all-women's circle. We opened with a Rapé ceremony, a sacred (non-psychedelic) tobacco medicine from the Amazon.

My intention for the ceremony was to connect with my essence. I’d been feeling off for the past few weeks. Trapped in

the cycles of striving and grasping, believing I needed to change something about myself or attain something outside of myself. Another theme I'd also been working through was receiving unconditional love. I've done a lot of work and am finally at a place where I can wholeheartedly say that I love myself unconditionally. Yet, there was still a part that doubted that other people would be able to love and accept me unconditionally.

So, while I was in a weird headspace, I was incredibly excited. Above all, I was spiritually curious to explore the truth of consciousness (and our universe). I wasn't nervous, I trusted that surrender would yield a powerful experience. I also didn't know what to expect. In hindsight, I'm grateful for that naivety. I'm not sure I would've signed up if I'd known the intensity of the journey I was about to embark on.

My Journey Into the Center of the Cosmos: Fear, Terror, Dissolution, Beauty and Bliss

I was up second and eagerly sat down cross-legged in front of my guide, right in the center of a fringed round blanket covered in colorful sacred geometry. My guide handed me a tiny glass bottle that contained the pulverized medicine. I moved it to my heart for a few moments to connect with my intention. She reminded me to extend an invitation to the medicine to show me what it was here to show me today, which I did.

Next, I was instructed to breathe in and out deeply and slowly. As my guide monitored my breath, she was preparing and

eventually lighting up the pipe. Moments later, the pipe met my lips and I began inhaling the funky-tasting smoke.

This process alone was rough. I inhaled and inhaled and felt at maximum capacity, but was told to continue. For an ex-smoker, this was surprisingly challenging. Holding the smoke in afterward was even more uncomfortable.

Within seconds, the experience started. The last thing my consciousness registered was my body collapsing down to the floor.

I don't remember much from (what I learned afterwards) would be the first 10 minutes of my journey. All notion of space and time dissolved in an instant, and so did every part of conscious recollection of myself. I wasn't there. There were no thoughts, just experience. And that experience was not pleasant. Quite the opposite, it was terrifying. I don't remember enough (yet?) to know what made it so distressing.

With ayahuasca, at least there is the purge to provide release. I wish I could have purged with this medicine, but that's not part of it. You just have to endure and move through it to move past it.

Also, the ability to surrender is something that's always been key to navigating journeys for me, yet here, it did not seem relevant. I wasn't there, there was nothing or no one to do the surrendering.

I still haven't found out what happened in those ten minutes, for all I know I could have screamed, yelled, rolled around, cried out — I wouldn't know. I turned around to lie on my side and

carefully blinked open one eye. My guide was sitting right next to me and softly said, “I want you to smoke a little bit more”. My immediate reaction was, “absolutely not, this was terrifying!”. I believe the only thing that came out was “I can’t”. As my guide leaned forward, she whispered in my ear, “you’re at the verge of a great breakthrough, I can see it, you just have to go back in one more time. Trust the process.”

I sat up and without thinking much about it began deepening my breath for round two. I trust my guide immensely — she knew me, and I knew she knew the medicine.

My second inhale was equally unpleasant, but I intended to hold it in longer, thinking that this might have cut my experience short the previous time.

The last thing I consciously noticed before the experience started was that the physical holding in was not actually what was uncomfortable, what was so distressing was what was happening as a result of it. I wanted it to stop but pushed through and held it in as long as I could, only to collapse back to the floor a few seconds later.

I was shot back straight into the terrifying void. However, this time, I could sense that something wanted to come through, something wanted to shift. There was something else though that resisted hard, it wouldn’t let me. It seems that it was precisely the resistance that was responsible for the discomfort, and it stemmed from my thinking mind, my ego. Since I wasn’t able to transcend it the first time around and, I was trapped in the void. This time would be different though.

As I once again dissolved and became everything all at once, everything that had ever happened and everything that ever will, I found myself suddenly and miraculously at what I can only describe as the center of the universe. Pure cosmic consciousness.

The shift was so overwhelming, it took me some time (although there was absolutely no concept of time) to recognize what it was that was overwhelming me so much.

Then it hit me. It was beauty.

In one of my very first plant medicine ceremonies, ayahuasca taught me that love is the fabric of the universe.

Last week, Bufo taught me that this is true but it's also more nuanced.

Beauty is the fabric of the universe, and the experience of beauty is love.

For the remainder of my journey, I bathed in an unspeakable and overwhelming experience of beauty. I recognized myself as the fabric of the universe and with that, a direct manifestation of that beauty.

Over and over, I would feel overwhelmed and pulled away only to realize that the parts that were pulling me away, the parts that were overwhelmed were all the parts that were holding on to everything that was in the way of accepting that ultimate truth, that ultimate beauty. All the reasons, experiences, and thoughts that were challenging the possibility of that reality (although none of them came back individually, it was just a visceral experience of everything at once).

I asked the medicine to help me let go of all of it. To release it. The more I did, the more beauty I experienced. As I was slowly regaining some level of (still heavily altered) consciousness, my thoughts shifted from “okay, take everything that’s in the way” to “okay, now show me how beautiful I am”.

And the medicine did show me. Tears began pouring down my face.

“Of course. How could I forget.”

The insight moved through me in the form of a great remembering. As if I’d once known this, I’d been here before. It was extremely unfamiliar and extremely familiar at the same time. I melted into the bliss and beauty of the experience and marinated in my great remembering, the reality that beauty was at the core of everything. Beauty was the essence of the universe, and because I was a manifestation of the universe, my essence was beauty, too.

A few minutes later, I opened my eyes to find my guide softly smiling at me.

Her glaze told me she knew. She always knew, and now she knew that I knew, too. This woman had been a special force in my journey with plant medicine. She radiates the purest form of love and I’m not the only one who feels that way about her. I realized how she’s able to do that, and it is because she sees the beauty in herself and everything around her.

Coming Back To Life & Integrating the Experience

The days following my experience have been an intense whirlwind of ups and downs. My emotions were incredibly

heightened. Every single night in my dreams, I dropped back into the medicine, only to find myself back in the field of universal consciousness, at times the void, at times the beauty. I randomly burst into tears of awe and gratitude as I go on my daily walks or listen to music.

I wish I'd taken some time off after this experience, I underestimated the impact it would have on me. I went back straight into a busy work week and a weekend trip to New York. Then again, I found myself invited to find the beauty in all the things that were keeping me so busy, and in the diverse nature that New York has to offer: humans.

This experience, as much as previous ones or perhaps even more so, will require deliberate integration efforts and I have yet to determine what this will look like. The simplest integration practice that I can immediately adopt is to discover the beauty in everything around me on a daily basis.

Not lastly, in myself.

Because, as the toad helped me explore, "what if I truly am the most beautiful thing in the world?"